

... Hope of life in the building trades for soon-to-be-released inmates

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she doesn't want to leave.

"I had a desire to do something that fed my soul," Netherwood tells the Labor Press. "I love carpentry, but it's not as soul-feeding to remodel somebody's \$190,000 kitchen as it is for me to be here in a teaching role."

Netherwood began each class with calisthenics, from 10 minutes of sit-ups to 45-minute workouts. Then they'd dive into applied math — algebra and geometry, the math of measurement.

Netherwood had help from Shelly McGinnis, an inmate teacher's aide, and from Billings the "safety dog" — a participant in Coffee Creek's program training service dogs.

Students were also taught by visiting subject matter experts from union apprenticeship programs — carpenters, electrical workers, laborers, roofers, painters, and interior finishers.

"For some of the students, it looked like their first time using a power tool," said Miguel Montaña, a trainer at the Pacific Northwest Carpenters Apprenticeship program.

Montaña, addressed affectionately by students as "Mr. M" before the ceremony, said the class faced other obstacles. Some kinds of tools were

deemed too hazardous to allow into a secure facility, like a 6-inch drywall jab saw, which looks too much like a hand-held knife. And they couldn't cut wood inside, because dust particulates could trigger the sprinkler system. Instead, the program set up a work station in a fenced area outdoors.

Team-building, Netherwood said, took time.

"Being in here is competitive," Netherwood said. "You have to watch out for yourself. There's a lot of drama, and not a lot of opportunities to work as a team."

But Netherwood set an expectation that regardless of what happened outside the class, inside, they were expected to act professionally, and to work as a team, as they would on a construction site. Over the course of the program, three students were dropped for infractions that took place outside the class, but none for anything that happened inside. No tools went missing. No one failed the class. And by the end, they'd worked as a team to construct two small dwellings, which will be reassembled at the Salem headquarters of Oregon Corrections Enterprises.

At graduation, many of the students choked up.

"Thank you for not shaming us for the way that we talk, or the way we are," said inmate Jami Mims, addressing Netherwood.

Netherwood replied with her own thanks — for students' honesty and loyalty, and for patiently indulging "two-hour rants about the beauty of an 18-gauge finish nail."

"I'm glad I didn't judge them up front," Netherwood told the Labor Press, "because I got to know a person that's more than you see on the outside."

Harmonie Vandewarker, given the nickname "Helmet" by her peers, said she gained confidence with every two-by-four, which, she added, "is actually 1-1/2" by 3-1/2."

The confidence is theirs for keeps. Students will also keep their standard OSHA-approved hard hats, decorated with stickers from each participating union trade.

And the huts they built, in the future, may end up being used as temporary shelters for homeless people in the Eugene area.

A week after the graduation, the program had its first success story. Charity Henshaw, who wants to be a finish carpenter, was called into the correctional facility's office and told she'd have an opportunity upon release



Valayshea Shaffer operates a power saw in a fenced-in area set up for an experimental inmate building trades pre-apprenticeship program. (Photo by Dave Conway, courtesy of Oregon Corrections Enterprises)

for direct entry into the Carpenters' Exterior/Interior Systems program. Montaña had remembered her, and put her name forward as a candidate.

She's due for release May 16. Her first plan out of the gate is to attend the May 19 Women In Trades Fair in Portland.

...Right-to-work

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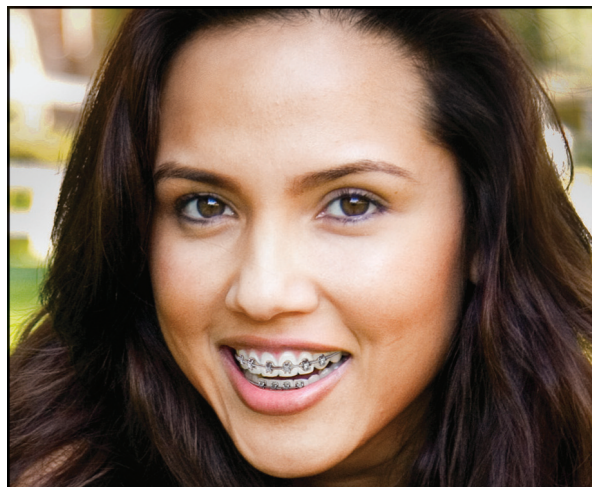
tial signatures March 15, the Oregon Department of Justice issued a draft ballot title March 25. The initiative could be approved for full-scale signature gathering in as little as six weeks if the state attorney general and secretary of state determine that it meets legal standards, and if there's no legal challenge to the language that would appear on the ballot describing the initiative.

Backers would then have until July 3, 2014, to gather 87,213 valid signa-

tures from registered voters in order to qualify for the ballot.

On March 13, the campaign reported a \$6,000 contribution from Loren Parks, a Nevada millionaire who has bankrolled many previous anti-union measures.

The Oregon AFL-CIO is already campaigning against the proposal: It's directing members to *wrongforeveryone.com* to get educated about it, and it's making available a right-to-work toolkit that includes fliers and images to post to Facebook and Twitter.



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